



## Governors Guide to January in the Masai Mara

January is the peak of Summer in the Masai Mara and days start of cool and move to hot by midday. There is sporadic rain and the grasslands remain fairly short, lush and green. Up on Paradise Plain the grass grows long to almost half a metre. The short grass is perfect for the resident plains game as it is nutrient rich and predators are much more visible.

Mocker and Green banded swallowtail **Butterflies** flit through the forests and there is a large presence of raucous black and white hornbills. The Warburgia trees are fruiting and this draws in **Parrots** who sit in the high branches eating only the seeds inside the fruit, they drop the flesh and skins below to **baboons** who happily feast on their leftovers.

The new generation of **plains game** is thriving on the new lush grass brought on by the rains. **Elephants** are regular visitors to the Governors family of camps, families of elephant move through the marsh feeding on the sedge grasses and into the forests around our camps, where they feed on the new growth of Teclea and Warburgia fruits. Elephant bulls often in musth follow the herds looking for females in oestrus and amongst the family groups there are often small calves. Bull elephants like to rock large Warburgia trees shaking them so that the fruit falls down, we have had comical sights of baboons peacefully feeding in the canopy of a Warburgia tree only to be followed by shrieks of panic as baboons hold tight as a determined bull elephant shakes the tree, on occasion baboons fall out and one January we watched as a hungry elephant shook 4 baboons right out of a Warburgia tree!





Mara River levels drop and **hippos** get squeezed into the last remaining deep pools, all this close living results in tension and fights breakout amongst the males. Females whose young are around 4 – 8 weeks old tend to keep their distance from the larger pods for safety reasons.

The Marsh Pride of **lions** spend more time apart as the game becomes more sparse and they need to cover more ground. They come together on occasion when there is a meal to be shared or they are in need of social bonding. With Mara River levels getting lower the Paradise Pride crosses the river regularly spending their time hunting hippos. **Cheetah** also have to move further in search of prey, they frequent the short grass plains regularly hunting antelope and feeding quickly before the resident hyena move in. **Leopards** have more frequent encounters with baboons and we hear the calls of both taunting one another in the forests around our camps. With the grass short **Serval Cats** seem to jump up at every turn their camouflage not so effective in the short grass.



## **Birds**

We see some amazing **migratory birds** like the Steppes Eagle, which comes all the way from the Russian Steppes, Violet backed Starlings which migrate around Kenya following the fruiting trees. European Bee-eaters, Eurasian Rollers, Pallid Harriers, Common Kestrels and a few white storks. We also see huge flocks of Swallows, Swifts and Martins flying ahead of the rainstorms picking up insects that have been startled into flight.